

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 EURE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 /098 W
-----251657Z 110369 /50

P R 251611Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2082
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 12069

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR FT FR
SUBJ: QUAI COMMENT ON DJIBOUTI

REF: PARIS 11438

1. QUAI DJIBOUTI DESK OFFICER (FAURE) TOLD US APRIL 25
THAT THE SIXTY-FIVE NAMES ON THE SOLE LIST OF CANDIDATES
SUBMITTED BY THE APRIL 23 FILING DEADLINE FOR THE MAY 8
DJIBOUTI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS REPRESENT ALMOST
EXCLUSIVELY THE FACTIONS THAT ATTENDED THE PARIS
ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE, I.E., THE SOMALI-LEANING LPAI
AND FLCS, KAMIL GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS, AND THE
PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY OF SENATOR BARAKAT. TWO OR
THREE UNI MEMBERS WHO HAD SUPPORTED ALI AREF CHANGED
CAMPS AT THE LAST MINUTE AND WERE INCLUDED ON THE
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SINGLE LIST, BUT THE MASS OF UNI BACKERS, THE MPL AND
THE MLD, IN OTHER WORDS, MOST AFARS, ARE NOT
REPRESENTED ON THE LIST. THE HOPED-FOR COMPROMISE
BETWEEN HASSAN GOULED AND ALI AREF WAS NOT ACHIEVED,
AND THE LATTER CHOSE NOT TO SUBMIT A COMPETING LIST.
THUS THE ELECTION OF THE SIXTY-FIVE, INCLUDING 33 ISSAS
AND RELATED GROUPS, 30 (RENEGADE) AFARS, AND TWO ARABS,

IS ASSURED.

2. WHILE STILL TOO EARLY TO MAKE A FINAL ASSESSMENT, FAURE THOUGHT THE MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION WAS THAT THE AFARS, EGGED ON BY ETHIOPIA, HAVE DECIDED TO OPPOSE THE ABOUT-TO-BE-ELECTED GOVERNMENT. THIS MIGHT TAKE THE FORM OF BOYCOTTING THE ELECTIONS AND, SUBSEQUENTLY, OF ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH A GREATER AFAR STATE INCLUDING PORTIONS OF THE FTAI, ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA. THE LATTER WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE ATTEMPTED SO LONG AS FRENCH TROOPS ARE IN DJIBOUTI. FAURE SPECULATED THAT THE AFAR-ETHIOPIAN TACTIC THEREFORE MIGHT BE TO TRY TO APPEAR REASONABLE VIS-A-VIS THE NEW DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT IN THE HOPE THAT THE PREDOMINANT ISSAS, WHO AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF OFFICIAL DISCRIMINATION BEAR NO LOVE FOR THE FRENCH, FINALLY WOULD DECIDE TO REQUEST THE DEPARTURE OF FRENCH TROOPS.

3. AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION, ALTHOUGH ONE FAURE CONSIDERED DUBIOUS, WAS THAT ALI AREF IS WILLING TO STAY OUT OF POLITICS TO INCREASE HIS ALREADY CONSIDERABLE FORTUNE IN BUSINESS, WITH THE EXPECTATION OF RETURNING TO THE ARENA IN A FEW YEARS. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WAS THAT ALI AREF, HIS AFAR FOLLOWERS AND

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THE ETHIOPIANS, HAVING MISJUDGED THE SITUATION BY REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND BOYCOTTING THE PARIS ROUNDTABLE, ARE NOW WAITING TO SEE HOW EVENTS UNFOLD BEFORE DETERMINING THEIR NEXT MOVE.

4. FAURE NOTED THAT SOMALIA NOW WISHES FRENCH TROOPS TO REMAIN BUT THAT ETHIOPIA'S INTENTIONS REMAIN OMINOUSLY UNCLEAR. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TAITTINGER IS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE FOR ADDIS MAY 3. HE HOPES TO CONVINCE THE AUTHORITIES HE IS ABLE TO SEE THAT BY INSISTING THAT 30 AFARS BE INCLUDED ON THE SINGLE LIST, THE FRENCH HAVE PROTECTED AFAR AND ETHIOPIAN INTERESTS; THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT, IN ORDER TO PROTECT ITS OWN INTERESTS, WILL WISH TO STAY
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INDEPENDENT OF SOMALIA; AND THAT A GENUINELY INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI IS THE BEST GUARANTEE FOR THE ETHIOPIAN LIFELINE. THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO COUNSEL MODERATION, BUT ARE NOT SANGUINE ABOUT TAITTINGER'S ABILITY TO CONVINCE THE ETHIOPIANS.

5. COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE SUCH THAT THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI AGAIN WILL BE REVIEWED. AS SUGGESTED IN REFTEL COMMENT, THE PROSPECT OF A FRENCH WITHDRAWAL APPEARS TO HAVE INCREASED.
HARLAN

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